

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A liquid food product containing particles of dehydrated lactic acid bacteria chosen from lactobacilli and bifidobacteria coated with at least one vegetable fat that is solid at ambient temperature, wherein said coated particles of lactic acid bacteria have an average size of less than 200 μm , wherein said vegetable fats are chosen from hydrogenated and nonhydrogenated, fractionated or unfractionated, esterified or nonesterified substances, food waxes, fatty acids, palm oils with an melting point (Mp) of 45°C and 58°C, cocoa butter, peanut butter, palm kernel oil, carnauba wax with an Mp = 80-85°C, microcrystalline wax of petroleum origin, palmitic acid, and mixtures thereof, said vegetable fats having a melting point above 40°C, and wherein said coated particles contain lactic acid bacteria in an amount greater than or equal to 1×10^{10} CFU per gram of coated particles, said coated particles are free of starch, and said food product has a pH of less than or equal to 4.5 and a water content by weight of at least 90%.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the average size of said coated particles is between 150 and 200 μm .

4. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the food product is in the form of a fermented milk or of a beverage.

5. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 4, wherein the beverage is a fruit juice, a mixture of milk and of fruit juice or a vegetable juice.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 4, wherein the lactic acid bacteria are chosen from *Lactobacillus casei*, *Lactobacillus plantarum*, *Bifidobacterium animalis* and *Bifidobacterium breve*.

8. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 5, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is a *Lactobacillus casei* I-1518.

9. (Previously Presented) A food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the lactic acid bacteria are dehydrated by lyophilization prior to them being granulated.

10. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 9, wherein the bacteria are treated with a lyoprotectant prior to them being lyophilized.

11. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the particles of dehydrated bacteria ~~before granulation~~ have an average size of between 80 and 150 μm prior to granulation.

12. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the particles of dehydrated bacteria have a water activity of less than 0.25.

13-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the concentration of dehydrated lactic acid bacteria in the coated particles is between 1×10^{10} CFU per gram of coated particles and 5×10^{11} CFU per gram of coated particles.

17. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein said coated particles have a water activity of less than 0.4.

18. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the fat(s) represent(s) from 40% to 75% by weight relative to the total weight of the coated particles.

19. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the concentration of coated lactic acid bacteria is between 5×10^6 and 5×10^9 CFU per gram of said food product.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the amount of said coated particles is less than 2% by weight relative to the total weight of said food product.

22. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 16, wherein the amount of said coated particles is between 0.01% and 1% by weight relative to the total weight of said food product.